



longnose gar

Lepisosteus osseus

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Osteichthyes
Order:	Semionotiformes
Family:	Lepisosteidae

Features

The longnose gar has a torpedo-shaped body with the dorsal and anal fins near the tail. The body is covered with tough, interlocking, diamond-shaped scales. The mouth is a long beak lined with sharp teeth. The beak is relatively narrower and longer than the shortnose gar. There are large round black spots in the dorsal, anal, and tail fins. It is olive to dark green above and silvery below. It may reach a maximum length of 4 1/2 feet.

Natural History

The longnose gar is most common in the border rivers, but can be found in larger interior rivers. It also may be in oxbow lakes along larger rivers. It may eat a few insects and crayfish, but eats mostly fish. It basks in the sun near the surface of the water and ambushes its prey. It spawns in May and June over gravel or weed beds. A large female (40 inches) may produce 36,000 eggs. The eggs are reported to be toxic to warm-blooded animals. The longnose gar

grows very rapidly, reaching 18 inches at the end of its first year. Males mature at two to three years and females mature at four or five years of age. An individual may live 30 years. The swim bladder is well supplied with blood vessels and can be used as an auxiliary breathing organ.

Habitats

Mississippi River; Missouri River; interior rivers and streams; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

border rivers and larger tributaries of Iowa

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.